

tion is that it further encourages investors to invest if they believe that there is the possibility of liquidating their invention assets if desired.

[0081] The home webpage **2** may also include a second Purchase Rights section **20**, allowing a user to browse inventions according to invention categories such as automotive, chemicals, communications, computer, electronics, energy, games, housewares, industrial, medical & health, pharmaceutical, sporting goods, software, toys, and transportation. Of course, other categories are within the scope of the invention, such as an “other” category, a “wild and wacky” category, or other invention categories. When a user clicks on one of these categories, it takes him to a new webpage showing inventions within that category.

[0082] The home webpage **2** may also include a second link section **16** including links to other useful webpages on the website, including patent Pending (describing the patent-pending nature of the method and system utilized by the website), Terms of Use (describing an agreement made between the company and a user of the website), News (including press releases or other relevant news regarding the company, business, inventions, inventors, investors, etc.), and a Contact webpage.

[0083] When the user selects or clicks on any of the criteria in the first Purchase Rights section **14**, she is taken to a new webpage on the website showing inventions corresponding to that criterion. For example, if she selects Unsearched, she is taken to the webpage shown in FIG. **2**, having Title **22** of “Unsearched Inventions.” The webpage shows a list of invention boxes **24** each containing descriptions of inventions fitting the named criterion or category (in the present example, unsearched inventions), including a title **36**, pictures or drawings **38** (two are shown by fewer or more may be included), abstract **40** (which may be a brief description of the invention), and price/other **42** (which may indicate a current price, bid, clearing price, sales rank, number of shares sold, popularity, number of stars, auction time remaining, or any other pertinent information). The webpage may also be designed to list inventions fitting the named criterion by fewer variables (e.g., just the names of fitting inventions) or more variables (e.g., all pertinent information related to fitting inventions listed).

[0084] In the case of unsearched inventions, the company may require that a first or second threshold is reached within a predetermined period of time (such as one or two weeks) in order to protect the inventor’s date of conception or reduction to practice by diligently submitting at least a provisional patent application. Inventions for which provisional patent applications have been submitted may, at the company’s discretion, remain on the website for sale for a much longer period of time (although not exceeding a year after the provisional has been filed, since it expires after a year) to give the invention time to reach the next threshold and proceed toward a patent.

[0085] The webpage may include a scroll bar **26** allowing a user to scroll down and browse among invention boxes that, due to quantity, will not otherwise fit on the user’s computer screen. The webpage may include a purchase rights section **28** that allows a user to browse inventions according to various criteria or categories, such as New Submission, Hot Inventions, Searched, patent Pending, patented, or Categories (or a list of specific categories), but it may leave out Unsearched because the user is already viewing unsearched inventions. The webpage may also include a Sort section **30**

that allows the user, by clicking on the appropriate phrase, to sort the listed inventions according to one or more of Auction closing time (e.g., soonest closing time to most distant closing time), Current closing price (e.g., ascending or descending), Star ranking (e.g., number of stars received by users, ascending or descending), Development stage (e.g., newly submitted, all the way to patented, etc.), and any other sorting possibilities or options. A search box **32** may be included on this or any webpage (such as under the second Purchase Rights section **20** in FIG. **1**) to allow a user to search for specific terms (according to a Boolean search, natural language, or other search methodology) in the inventions. If he types “rocket,” for example, the website may display for him all inventions that include the word “rocket” in the title, abstract, and/or description, and the website may rank these inventions according to where the word “rocket” was found, how many times the word “rocket” was used, or any other variable for sorting by relevance. The webpage may also include a link section **34** that may include links to the Home webpage, My Account (which may link to the webpage shown in FIG. **4**), Top 10 (which may link to a webpage showing the top ten inventions, by whatever the company’s criteria), How It Works (previously described), and Contact information. Of course, links to other useful webpages and information may be included in the link sections described herein, and are not limited to those shown.

[0086] As a potential investor browses the inventions for sale shown in FIG. **2**, he may become more curious about a particular invention, and may click on one of the invention boxes **24**, leading him to the webpage shown in FIG. **3**. FIG. **3** shows a webpage having a very full description of a particular invention, including Title **44** of the invention, an Email Friend **46** link (allowing the user to send information about the invention to another person via email), a first information section **48** including Developmental Stage (e.g., whether the invention has been professional searched, submitted in a provisional or nonprovisional patent application, patented, etc.), patent application No. (if applicable, which may include a link to the full patent application, the application publication (if applicable), and/or the prosecution information about the application available on the Patent Office website), Number of Stars, and other important information.

[0087] In one embodiment, users are given a certain number of “stars” (generally, preference indicators) that they may assign to their favorite inventions. Stars may be awarded only when users pay a fee through the website, or when they become investors, or when they deposit a certain amount of money to use for investing, and so forth, or may simply be available for free to anyone who signs up as a user. These stars may be given, received, and used in any manner known in the art, such as a currency, like used by the Hollywood Stock Exchange™, whereby users are given “Hollywood money” (\$H) for free and may place \$H in various movies, actors, and so forth. For example, users may be given a fixed or unlimited number of stars, may earn them in various ways, or may receive a certain number of stars per use or time, etc., and may “spend” them on inventions of their liking. Users may be limited to giving only one or up to a fixed number of stars per invention, or may give an unlimited number of stars per invention. The stars may act like a currency such that when users spend their stars on inventions they like, the “price” in stars of the invention increases, which indicates to investors that there is a greater public interest in the invention than other inventions. The stars may act like a rating system instead,